

CLAIMS

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A method of dispensing, tracking and managing pharmaceutical products utilizing prescribers, pharmacies, and a central computing station, comprising the steps of:

- a) forming a series of product cards by encoding on respective product cards information that identifies a particular pharmaceutical product;
- b) issuing the product cards to participating prescribers;
- c) activating the product cards after issuance to prescribers by the prescribers communicatively linking the product cards to the central computing station and wherein activation is established by the central computing station verifying the authenticity of the product cards, recording selected information encoded on the product cards in a database associated with the central computing station, and finally approving activation;
- d) transferring a respective activated product card from a prescriber to a patient;
- e) the patient in turn presenting the activated product card to a participating pharmacy;
- f) validating the activated product card at the pharmacy by the pharmacy communicatively linking the presented product card with the central computing station and verifying that the presented product card has in fact been activated and not previously validated;
- g) after validating the presented product card, the pharmacy then dispensing the approved pharmaceutical product to the patient; and

h) periodically accounting to the participating pharmacies for pharmaceutical product dispensed in accordance with the records of the database associated with the central computing system.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the product cards when delivered to a prescriber are in an unactivated state and wherein the activation of the product cards takes place while the same are in the possession of a prescriber.

3. The method of claim 2 further including the step of issuing an authorization card to the participating prescribers and wherein activation of the product card is conditioned upon respective prescribers establishing authorization.

4. The method of claim 3 including the step of establishing prescriber authorization by communicatively linking a prescriber's authorization card with the central computing station and verifying the authenticity of the prescriber's authorization card.

5. A method of dispensing, tracking and managing pharmaceutical products utilizing prescribers, pharmacies, and a system including a central computing station and database, comprising the steps of:

- a) forming a product media and encoding that media with information that identifies a particular pharmaceutical product;
- b) issuing the product media to one or more prescribers;
- c) activating the product media by a prescriber communicatively linking the product media to the central computing station wherein the central computing station records encoded information from the product media into a database associated with the central computing station and thereby activates the product media;

- d) the step of activating the product media including entering data associated with the product media into a terminal and thereafter uploading data associated with the product media from the terminal to the central computing station;
- e) transferring the activated product media from a prescriber to a patient;
- f) the patient then presenting the activated product media to a pharmacy;
- g) validating the product media at the pharmacy by communicatively linking the presented product media with the central computing station which determines if the presented product media has in fact been activated by a prescriber and if activated, the central computing station approves dispensing of the pharmaceutical product identified and authorized by that product media;
- h) the step of validating the product media including entering data from the activated product media into a terminal and uploading that data from the terminal to the central computing station;
- i) after validating the presented product media, dispensing the approved pharmaceutical product to the patient; and
- j) periodically accounting to the participating pharmacies for pharmaceutical product dispensed in accordance with the records of the database associated with the central computing station.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein activation of the product media is conditioned upon the activating prescriber being an authorized prescriber, and wherein validation and

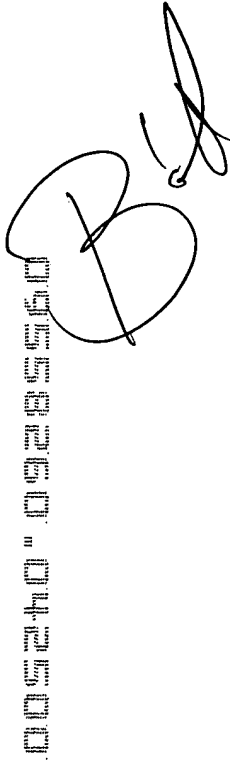
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dispensing of the pharmaceutical product is conditioned upon the validating and dispensing pharmacy being an authorized pharmacy.

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7. The method of claim 6 wherein authorization for both prescribers and pharmacies is established in part at least by issuing a uniquely identifying authorizing media to each participating prescriber and pharmacy and wherein the step of authorization entails prescribers and pharmacies establishing a communication link between the issued authorizing media and the central computing station wherein the central computing station effectively scans the issued authorizing media so as to authenticate the same.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein participating prescribers and pharmacies are provided with a communication terminal for communicating with the central computing station, and wherein prescriber and pharmacy authorization is further conditioned upon the initialization of the communication terminal associated with respective prescribers and pharmacies.

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9. A system for tracking and managing the dispensing of pharmaceutical products utilizing medical prescribers and pharmacies, comprising:

- a) a central computing station having an associated database;
- b) a first array of communication terminals located remotely from the central computing station at various medical prescriber sites with each communication terminal communicatively linked to the central computing station;
- c) a second array of communication terminals located remotely from the central computing station at various pharmacy sites with each communication terminal communicatively linked to the central computing station;

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- d) a pharmaceutical product media encoded with information identifying a particular pharmaceutical product;
 - e) the pharmaceutical product media assuming the form of individual media slips with each individual media slip including the encoding information particularly identifying the pharmaceutical product; and
 - f) wherein the prescriber terminals and the pharmacy terminals are capable of receiving and reading the encoded information associated with the individual pharmaceutical product media slips and communicating that information to the central computing station where the central computing station tracks and manages the movement of the individual pharmaceutical media slips between prescribers, patients and pharmacies and also controls the actual dispensing of the pharmaceutical product identified by the individual pharmaceutical product media slips.

10. The system for tracking and managing the distribution of pharmaceutical products of claim 9 further including a series of system authorization media slips with each authorization media slip including specific information particularly identifying an authorized medical prescriber or pharmacy and wherein the authorization media slips are transferred to the appropriate participating medical prescribers and pharmacies; and wherein the prescriber and pharmacy terminals are capable of reading the authorization media slips and communicating the encoded information thereon to the central computing station for authorization verification such that after authorization has been established, authorized prescribers or pharmacies are

then permitted access to the system for purposes of prescribing or dispensing pharmaceutical products.

11. A method of prescribing and dispensing prescription pharmaceutical products comprising:
- a. forming a pharmaceutical product media and encoding that media with information that identifies one or more particular prescription pharmaceutical products;
 - b. issuing the pharmaceutical product media to one or more prescribers;
 - c. activating the pharmaceutical product media and transferring the activated pharmaceutical product media from a prescriber to a patient, wherein the activated pharmaceutical product media identifies one or more prescription pharmaceutical products that have been prescribed by the prescriber for the patient; and
 - d. presenting the activated pharmaceutical product media to a pharmacy that fills the prescription identified by the pharmaceutical product media.
12. The method of claim 11, wherein activating the pharmaceutical product media entails a prescriber communicatively linking the pharmaceutical product media to a central computing station where the central computing station records encoded information from the pharmaceutical product media into a database associated with the central computing station.
13. The method of claim 11, wherein the pharmacy validates the pharmaceutical product media prior to fulfilling the prescription identified thereby.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein the validation of the pharmaceutical product media by the pharmacy includes communicatively linking the presented pharmaceutical product media with a central computing station which determines if the presented pharmaceutical product media has in fact been appropriately issued by a prescriber.

15. The method of claim 13, wherein prescribers activate the pharmaceutical product media prior to the same being issued to a patient, and wherein the activation by the prescriber includes the prescriber communicatively linking the pharmaceutical product media to a central computing station wherein the central computing station records encoded information from the pharmaceutical product media into a database associated with the central computing station, and wherein validation by the pharmacy includes communicatively linking the presented pharmaceutical product media with the central computing station to determine if the pharmaceutical product media has in fact been activated by a prescriber.

16. The method of claim 11, wherein the pharmaceutical product media includes a plurality of data fields, including at least one data field for identifying at least one prescribed pharmaceutical product, and associated data fields for identifying the quantity and number of refills for the associated prescribed pharmaceutical product.